

14 January 1981

Casey Promises to Revive Morale, 'Minimize' Restrictions at the CIA

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Declaring that "this is not the time for another bureaucratic shakeup of the CIA," William J. Casey said yesterday he would work to revive the spy agency's morale and "minimize" the restrictions that have been placed upon it in recent years.

The director-designate for the Central Intelligence Agency said at his confirmation hearing that he is confident there are ways to ease the restrictions, most of them laid down by executive order, "without infringing in any way on the rights of American citizens."

With most members of the Senate Intelligence Committee warmly endorsing every point, Casey said he also intended to improve the intelligence community's assessments and present them forcefully to the president and the National Security Council — but without glossing over the differences of opinion that have customarily been played down.

"I assure you that I will present these views without subjective bias and in a manner which reflects strongly held differences within the intelligence community," Casey told the senators.

He recalled how early intelligence reports about Soviet missiles in Cuba in 1962, about Soviet divisions preparing to enter Czechoslovakia in 1968 and about Arab preparations to attack Israel in 1973 were all "obscured" by faulty judgments.

A veteran of U.S. intelligence in World War II, Casey said he would encourage competing assessments and reports that emphasize "hard reality, undistorted by preconceptions or wishful thinking.... Alternative possibilities and their implications must be fully set forth in our assessments so that they can be reflected in our preparation and in our policies."

As director of central intelligence (DCI), Casey will be in charge of coordinating the work of U.S. intelligence services, including the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency and the State Department's bureau of intelligence and research.

The 67-year-old New York lawyer's hints of a new and more aggressive posture for the CIA were matched by calls from the Senate committee's new Republican majority for what Chairman Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.) called "strong, stable and experienced leadership."

For his part, Goldwater also seemed to dismiss proposals for wide-ranging organizational changes in the CIA, although they have been advocated in some GOP circles. Not a few Republicans have advocated splitting the CIA in two and setting up a separate agency for covert actions.

Goldwater, however, said he thought that "minor changes are probably in order, but wholesale changes are neither warranted nor desired."

Casey said he was inclined to agree that any such effort would be counterproductive. He testified easily and confidently, but with a characteristic mumble that has led many to predict he will be "the first DCI who won't need a scrambler telephone."

Under questioning by Sen. Walter D. Huddleston (D-Ky.), Casey said he didn't like to use the well-worn phrase about "unleashing the CIA," but he said he is in favor of "unleashing the ability of the organization to initiate and carry out its objectives."

In the field of covert actions, or secret operations designed to influence the internal affairs of foreign nations, Casey said he still "generally" subscribes to the view expressed by the so-called Murphy Commission, on which he served, in 1976.

The commission, which was established to study the implementation of U.S. foreign policy, concluded that any prohibition on covert action would put the country and its allies "at a dangerous disadvantage in many parts of the world." But the commission added that covert action "should be employed only where such action is clearly essential to vital U.S. purposes and then only after careful high-level review."

Sen. Joseph R. Biden Jr. (D-Del.) wondered what reservations Casey has that prompted him to say he only "generally" supports that view now.

Casey replied that the phrase "co-

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vert action" has become a "word of art" including minor, relatively inconsequential undertakings that should not require high-level review. He declined to give any examples in open session, but alluded to what he called a "minor journalistic effort" that had been discussed previously with the senators at an executive session.

"There is a point at which rigid accountability, detailed accountability can impair performance," Casey declared.

Goldwater voiced a similar theme, both in a prepared statement about the "need to reestablish a robustness in the intelligence system" and in subsequent remarks deploring what he said was the reluctance of CIA operatives abroad to do anything "without discussing it with the home office."

"If we don't have overseas offices free to act covertly, we're going to be in the same fix we were in in Vietnam where pilots weren't able to attack targets of opportunity," Goldwater protested.

Casey picked up the same phrase, "targets of opportunity," later in the hearing in an effort to explain the impossibility of getting advance approval for every operation. But he said he agreed that "any major, substantial clandestine operation which entails embarrassment or danger" should be brought to the committee's attention.

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